

Childhood Aggression:

Where does it come from?

How can it be managed?

Children aren't born aggressive, they learn it. However, children, parents, and caregivers also can learn how to cope with aggression. This guide answers some questions about aggression and how to teach social coping skills to children.

ag-gres-sion : e_'gre_shen, noun

- 1: a forceful action or procedure (such as an unprovoked attack), especially when intended to dominate or master.
- 2: the practice of making attacks or encroachments, especially unprovoked violation by one country of the territorial integrity of another.
- 3: hostile, injurious, or destructive behavior or outlook, especially when caused by frustration.

Where does aggression come from?

Do humans just have a fighting instinct? Is aggression the outcome of frustration? Most recent studies view aggressive acts not as the sole fault of the individual, but also as related to a set of cultural and social circumstances.

What factors lead to aggression?

The child

A child's temperament and his/her learned coping skills are critical to the youngster's being able to manage aggression. Statements such as "boys are supposed to act out their anger" or "she is wild" are common expressions that parents and others use to refer to a child's temperament.

Temperament is that part of the personality that seems to be controlled by genetics. There are basically three types of temperament—easy or flexible (60 percent of children), fearful and sensitive (25 percent of children), and feisty or difficult (15 percent of children).

The family

The level of family stress and the positive and negative interactions of the family influence children learning aggression. Children model their behavior after adults around them, observing and imitating how others handle their anger and frustration.

The community

Communities that understand and support children's rights are communities that support children and all their developmental stages. Places where there are supportive adults and healthy alternatives for recreation can protect children while they are learning to deal with many situations, including those that give rise to aggression.

The environment

Some studies have found that housing, schools, and neighborhoods can contribute to aggression. For example, extreme heat or overcrowding has been shown to increase aggression.

The culture

What sorts of models are children exposed to on television and in the community? When people try to solve problems with physical violence, children mistakenly learn that this is an appropriate behavior.

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